

Harry Potter

A HISTORY OF MAGIC

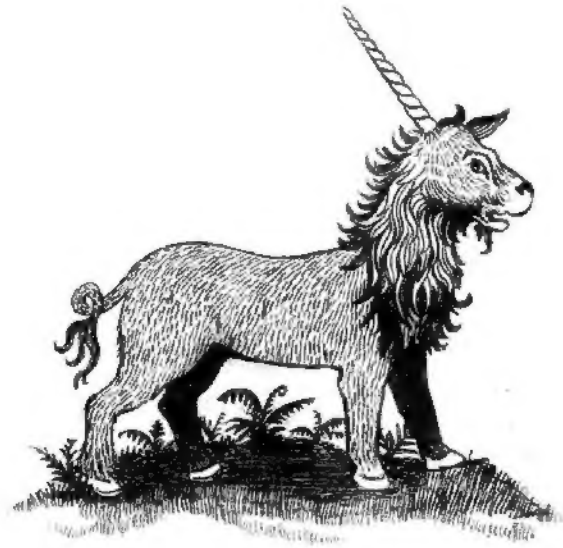


*A JOURNEY
THROUGH*

Care of Magical
Creatures

Harry Potter

A HISTORY OF MAGIC



A JOURNEY THROUGH

Care of
Magical Creatures

Illustrations by
Rohan Daniel Eason

Pottermore

PUBLISHING



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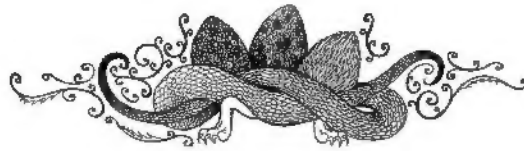
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INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

The history of magic is as long as time and as wide as the world. In every culture, in every age, in every place and, probably, in every heart, there is magic.

This series of eBooks will reveal the world of magic and unlock its secrets. It will go back thousands of years. It will travel to the far corners of the world. It will reach the stars. It will explore under the earth. It will decipher mysterious languages. We'll encounter some of the most colourful characters in history. We'll discover the curious incidents and truth behind legends. We'll see how, in the quest to discover magic, practitioners laid the foundations of science.

This series, structured around lessons from the Hogwarts curriculum, will show how this long and rich history has nourished the fictional world of Harry Potter.

The starting point for these eBooks was the exhibition *Harry Potter: A History of Magic*, which opened at the British Library in October 2017, twenty years after *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was first published in the UK in 1997. For the exhibition, curators spent over a year searching through the 150 million items that the British Library holds to find the most magical. Then they sourced special artefacts to be loaned from other notable institutions. In October 2018, the New-York Historical Society took on the British Library exhibition, adding books and artefacts from their own collection, as well as other fascinating loans.

This series of four eBook shorts contains worldly wonders from both exhibitions, exploring J.K. Rowling's magical inventions alongside their cultural and historical forebears. Throughout are links between ours and the wizarding world, told through extraordinary stories from the history of magic.



CARE OF MAGICAL CREATURES

We live in a time when we can watch, spellbound, astonishing video footage of animals from all over the world at any time: from the depths of the ocean to mountain peaks; from the heat of the desert to the cold of the Arctic; from the midst of the rainforest to an isolated island.

However, for millennia, people could only read strange tales or hear intriguing stories of creatures they were unlikely to ever see. Even the images they saw were often painted by artists who had never laid eyes on what they were depicting.

As the world was explored, tales of amazing new animals spread, and information – backed up by emerging scientific reasoning – was shared more widely. Books were filled with wondrous creatures and ‘cabinets of curiosity’ were created – collections of strange wonders from all over the world, mixing the real and the imagined: dragons and elephants, unicorns and narwhals.

At Hogwarts, Harry and his friends were given Care of Magical Creatures lessons, which introduced them to all manner of fantastic beasts: from unpredictable Hippogriffs that demanded a fair degree of caution and respect, to – frankly – repellent and downright dangerous Blast-Ended Skrewts.

People have always been fascinated with exotic animal life and strange, powerful, clever creatures with abilities that ignite the imagination, but today it’s relatively easy to distinguish truth from myth. Not that long ago, however, it wasn’t, and people were much more willing to believe in the

existence of things of which they hadn't seen any actual evidence.



PART 1: VISIONS OF THE UNICORN

The unicorn is a beautiful beast found throughout the forests of northern Europe. It is a pure white, horned horse when fully grown, though the foals are initially golden and turn silver before achieving maturity.

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them

Unicorns have been written about in natural history books and medical texts for thousands of years as though they might have been found out in the wild. Today, we have cute, cuddly toy unicorns that sneeze rainbows. The characteristics of unicorns have varied greatly down the years: there have been fierce unicorns, luck-bringing unicorns, unicorns as symbols of purity and unicorns whose body parts have magical medical properties.

They've lived in people's imaginations through stories and myths, so much so that you might just be able to believe that these wondrous beasts roamed free in some far-off exotic land. But, if these gentle, elusive woodland creatures did exist, sadly there would probably be someone who'd want to hunt them.

The blood of a unicorn will keep you alive, even if you are an inch from death, but at a terrible price. You have slain

something pure and defenceless to save yourself, and you will have but a half-life, a cursed life, from the moment the blood touches your lips.

Firenze - *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

In the Harry Potter series killing a unicorn is an awful thing to do, and historical traditions also underlined it as a very serious crime that resulted in sullyng your soul. In the real world there are documented instances of apparent unicorn hunting. One of them appears in Ambroise Paré's *Discourse* on the unicorn, published in 1582. Paré was chief surgeon to the French crown, an innovator and early adopter of evidence-based research. The book (despite its fantastical unicorns) was actually a text questioning the falsehoods in ancient medicine. His writing had been prompted by a patient asking a sceptical Paré to prescribe unicorn horn for some complaint – the image in his book showed the killing and skinning of a 'pirassoipi', or two-horned unicorn.

It was the unicorn all right, and it was dead. Harry had never seen anything so beautiful and sad. Its long, slender legs were stuck out at odd angles where it had fallen and its mane was spread pearly-white on the dark leaves.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone



'It's not easy ter catch a unicorn, they're powerful magic creatures. I never knew one ter be hurt before.'

Hagrid - *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

Unicorns also appeared in *On the Properties of Animals*, published in Paris in the 16th century. The book was a 'bestiary', a compendium of animals, written in Greek by a Cypriot scribe, and produced for a European audience. Bestiaries often combined animals that were real with animals that we now know to be mythical. Along with drawings and descriptions of creatures like the heron, the pelican, a wolf, a porcupine and a cuttlefish, this bestiary had a centaur with a pair of over-extended arms serving as its front legs!

The text accompanying the illustrations was a poem about the natural world composed by the Byzantine poet Manuel Philes, who lived at the turn of the 14th century. It was then copied out for the bestiary by a Cypriot called Angelos Vergekios two hundred years later, and illustrations were supplied by his daughter.



The unicorn depicted in this manuscript was not cute in any way, shape or form: it was a wild beast with a dangerous bite, the tail of a boar and the mouth of a lion. Its horn projected backwards, making it a rather useless weapon to stab anybody, unless you crept up from behind. But unicorns were also said to be extremely fast, and the method of their capture extremely complicated – if a hunter wanted to catch a unicorn, they would apparently need the assistance of a female virgin; the unicorn would be enticed to lay its head down in the virgin's lap and fall asleep, and the hunter could then sneak up on it unawares.



More doubts around the unicorn's existence were setting in by 1694. In his *Histoire générale des drogues* ('The

Compleat History of Druggs'), Pierre Pomet mentions the unicorn. Pomet was a Parisian pharmacist and chief apothecary to the Sun King himself, Louis XIV of France, and his position in the French court gave him access to enviable resources, including networks reaching around the world. These contacts provided him with valuable and unusual specimens, as well as some wonderful tales about fabulous beasts from distant shores.

His book was a practical medical manual that described an array of 17th-century medicinal ingredients and, perhaps due to the amazing descriptions and stories, it went down very well with non-medical professionals too. Who wouldn't want to read about miniature dragons that wound themselves around the legs of elephants, thrust their heads up their nostrils, put out their eyes, stung them and sucked out their blood?

But, in his chapter on the unicorn, Pomet would not confirm the animal's existence, conceding that 'we know not the real truth of the matter'. He acknowledged that what was commonly sold as unicorn horn 'is the horn of a certain fish called narwhal', a horn which was 'well used, on account of the great properties attributed to it, principally against poisons'.

There haven't been reports of unicorn sightings for a very long time, but narwhal horns certainly do exist: one particularly fine specimen can be found in the Explorer's Club in New York City. One of its earliest members was Teddy Roosevelt, the former president of the United States, himself a great explorer and known for his African safaris and adventurous spirit.



The clubhouse on the Upper East Side of Manhattan is stuffed full of trophies brought back from expeditions, and the narwhal tusk lives in the company of huge elephant tusks, a taxidermic polar bear and other extraordinary things. The clubhouse, a turn-of-the-century mansion with dark panelled rooms, even has something of Hogwarts about it.

A narwhal tusk is a miraculous thing. Twisted like barley cane and up to three metres long, it's actually not a horn,

but a tooth – and a strange one: a left canine that bursts out through the skin, leaving the rest of a narwhal’s mouth completely toothless.

Separated from the narwhal, it’s easy to see how people thought this pointed, twisted marine ivory was from a magical beast. It was almost a deliberate piece of wishful thinking, stemming from when Viking raiders brought narwhal tusks to the markets of Europe for sale. The tusks were connected in people’s minds with the stories of a magical horn that went back to ancient times, and so the legend grew.

The Vikings, and later hawkers of ‘unicorn horn’, could make a lot of money selling this magic horn, which was supposedly an antidote to all poisons. It’s said that the Vikings sold narwhal tusks for more than their weight in gold. The unicorn horn/narwhal tusk that was sold to Queen Elizabeth I of England in the latter half of the 16th century was supposed to have cost 10,000 florins, which would have bought you a decent-sized castle in that period. This behaviour fuelled a lucrative trade in narwhal tusks for hundreds of years, and it wasn’t until the era of exploration of the 18th century that it dawned on most Europeans what they had actually been trading in. Fortunately, narwhals are rarely hunted these days and their ‘unicorn horns’ stay where they belong.



PART 2: OWLS, CATS AND TOADS

Students may also bring an owl OR a cat OR a toad.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

These are the three animals a student is allowed to bring to Hogwarts, but how did they earn such a magical reputation?

At long last, the train stopped at Hogsmeade station, and there was a great scramble to get out; owls hooted, cats miaowed, and Neville's pet toad croaked loudly from under his hat.

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

Conrad Gessner's *Historiae animalium* was published in Zurich between 1551 and 1558 and is seen as the book that kick-started modern zoology. Like many works of the time it uses information from old sources, such as Greek and Roman thinkers and medieval bestiaries, so inevitably it included the odd unicorn or basilisk. It was a monumental work of 4,500 pages (much more than the seven Harry Potter books combined!), but one where Gessner tried to

separate fact from fiction and accurately describe every animal in the world, including the cat.

They made their way back up the crowded street to the Magical Menagerie. As they reached it, Hermione came out, but she wasn't carrying an owl. Her arms were clamped tightly around the enormous ginger cat.

'You bought that monster?' said Ron, his mouth hanging open.

'He's gorgeous, isn't he?' said Hermione, glowing.

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

Gessner's depiction was of a stripy cat with staring yellow eyes, sitting upright as its tail curls around its paws. Cats at the time had a bad reputation, and even Gessner describes them as being in possession of '*ingenium calliditas*' or a 'cunning character'. Edward Topsell, the first translator of Gessner's work, noted that: 'The familiars of witches do most ordinarily appear in the shape of cats, which is an argument that the beast is dangerous to soul and body.' Elsewhere, Gessner asserted 'that men have been known to lose their strength, perspire violently, and even faint at the sight of a cat'.



Cats impart an air of mischief because, although they're usually found in a domestic setting, their independent behaviour when they go out of the house can seem uninhibited. When you lock eyes with a cat in the street, you are probably both thinking, 'What are you up to?' It's that individuality and sense of potentially getting up to no good that has historically made cats subject to such negative speculation about their character. Just ask Crookshanks about some of his unfair treatment from Ron!

Something brushed his ankles. He looked down and saw the caretaker's skeletal grey cat, Mrs Norris, slinking past him. She turned lamplike yellow eyes on him for a moment before disappearing behind a statue of Wilfred the Wistful.

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix



'And you should have seen their faces when I got in here - they thought I might not be magic enough to come, you see. Great-uncle Algie was so pleased he bought me my toad.'

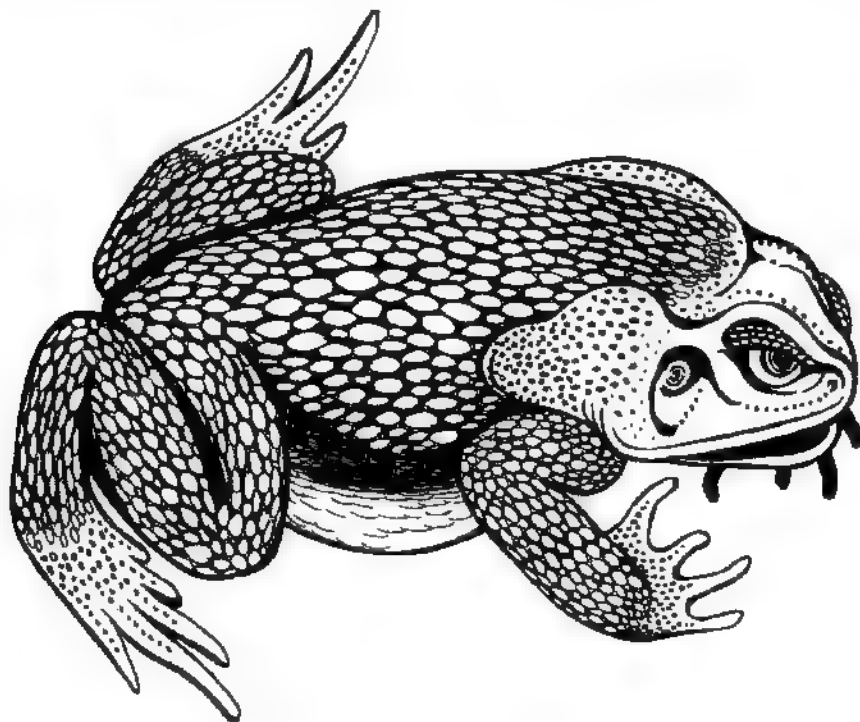
Neville Longbottom - Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

Back in the day, if you were going to do magic then you'd almost definitely need a toad. Some people nailed live toads to trees to cure warts. Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder not only believed a toad could silence a noisy crowd, but that a bone in its right side could cool boiling water, while a bone in its left side could repel the attack of a dog. Along with cats, toads were often associated with witches, either as a familiar (supernatural entities that would assist witches) or

as an ingredient in an enchanted brew. But, actually, toads are more likely to be dangerous than magical.

When the German biologist Johann Baptist von Spix visited Brazil in the early 19th century, he compiled a book about its animals, including the cane or giant marine toad (*Bufo* *agua*), called *Animalia nova, sive species novæ testudinum et ranarum, quas in itinere per Brasiliam annis 1817-20* (published in Munich in 1824). Spix explored regions of Brazil previously unknown to Europeans. He suffered from all sorts of diseases and almost died of thirst along the way, but he ultimately returned home with hundreds of specimens – enough to found a museum.

His book showed the cane toad as having a large, green, slightly warty body and distinctive unwebbed hands and feet. It's been around for millions of years and is highly toxic, the poison in its skin proving potentially fatal to attackers. The natural habitat of the cane toad is South and Central America, but it's been introduced to new countries to eradicate pests, particularly those found on sugarcane.



This project hasn't always been a resounding success, though. About 3,000 cane toads were released into the sugarcane plantations of Australia in 1935. Unfortunately, the cane toads didn't fancy eating the grey-backed cane beetles that were meant to be dinner – but they went for nearly everything else. As they have no predators Down Under, there are now several million toxic cane toads spreading all over the country and destroying native species.

Then there's the hazardous and potentially fatal practice that's developed among humans of licking cane toads for their hallucinogenic properties. Definitely not something to try.

Dangerous, hallucinogenic and with a magical reputation – if you're a witch or a wizard, a toad is apparently the perfect pet. Although at Hogwarts, Neville's pet toad Trevor seemed much more benign!



Twenty minutes later, they left Eeylops Owl Emporium, which had been dark and full of rustling and flickering, jewel-bright eyes. Harry now carried a large cage which held a beautiful snowy owl, fast asleep with her head under her wing.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

Owls swoop through every Harry Potter story. In the wizarding world, wherever you are, whatever you send and whoever you send it to, you need to use an owl to make sure it is delivered.

Two snowy owls, just like Hedwig, can be found in John James Audubon's *The Birds of America*. It was published in sections between 1827 and 1838, bound together in multiple volumes, and depicted every bird native to North America. It has been described as the most beautiful illustrated bird book ever.

The book was as big as Audubon's ambition. He decided to paint every bird life-size, with the result that the pages of the book were 'double elephant' folio size: about a metre tall. The biggest bird, a whooping crane, had to be illustrated bending down to eat a lizard so that it would fit. There are over 400 prints inside and a finished copy of the book is so heavy it requires several people to lift it up.

Audubon's two majestic snowy owls are shown on a tree in the moonlight. The larger female has dark spots on her white plumage, and the smaller male is a purer white with less variegated feathers. Even though Hedwig is female in the Harry Potter books, the movies used a male snowy owl to play the part since his completely white feathers looked great on camera and his lighter weight made it easier for the then-child actors to carry him.

John James Audubon had huge success from the production and sale of his ambitious illustrated books, but his early life was much more turbulent. Born in Haiti, he moved to France as a child but then went from France to Pennsylvania to avoid the turmoil following the French Revolution. He was meant to run his father's estate, but he flunked out of naval school due to chronic seasickness and instead fell in love with birds. He opened a string of general stores, built a great steam mill, rafted the Ohio and the Mississippi rivers and hunted for pay. But throughout, he always went back to sketching birds.

In 1819, when he was in his mid-thirties, he declared that he was going to paint every bird in North America. Obtaining the specimens, painting the birds and publishing the book then took him most of his working life.

He obtained the specimens in different ways: he lured a house wren with spiders and kept it alive as a pet. And often Audubon hunted birds with special soft shot so as not to damage their plumage. He'd then position the bird as he'd remembered seeing it in the wild and fasten it in place with wires. The aim was to create a realism that had never been seen before. Unlike other ornithological artists of the time, he not only posed the birds in a life-like way, but also in their natural habitat, with the food they ate and the trees they nested on.

Audubon also dissected the birds, measuring their insides and describing the contents of their stomachs. He even ate the birds, and tried not to waste anything on the frontier where he was searching for them: one woodpecker purportedly tasted like ants.

This passion and drive for authenticity was one thing, but it wouldn't have mattered if Audubon wasn't also a tremendously gifted self-taught artist – and a talented salesperson. Finding the birds, then making the most high-quality engravings possible, was incredibly expensive.

He sold *The Birds of America* by subscription, with his subscribers receiving five images every two to six weeks, varying in size (from small to huge) and not necessarily being delivered according to species. That meant the parcels were always a surprise, and made for a brilliant scheme of getting the series out there.

Though he was born in Haiti and raised in France, Audubon also gave himself the name 'the American Woodsman' and toured Europe playing up to the myth of the frontiersman. He danced and promoted himself as a kind of New World rock star in order to get the project off the ground, even going so far as to dress in buckskins (clothing

made from the hide of a deer) for the benefit of English audiences and putting bear grease in his hair in France.

His magnetic personality and vision, aligned with an almost transcendent sense of purpose, drove him to astonishing success. The combination of his subscription scheme and his promotional efforts meant that he garnered the equivalent of millions of dollars in today's money.



'Safe flight, then,' said Harry and he carried her to one of the windows; with a moment's pressure on his arm, Hedwig took off into the blindingly bright sky.

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix

Unlike those of most birds, owls' eyes aren't at the side of their heads, but facing front – just like people. If you look at an owl, it will look right back, which might explain the mysterious connection that some people (and wizards) have with owls.

The owls that used to be on the roof of the old New York Herald building in Manhattan are four feet tall and weigh over 100 kilogrammes a piece. They were commissioned by James Gordon Bennett Jr, heir to the *New York Herald* newspaper fortune, of whom stories of extravagant behaviour were legion. He had a 301-foot yacht ready to sail at his whim – it not only had a permanent crew of 100, but also its own padded stall for a cow, so Bennett could always

have fresh cream. It's often said that he rode his carriage about the streets of New York at break-neck speeds in the middle of the night completely naked. He flew an aeroplane through an empty barn. Most famously, newspapers were scandalised when there were reports of him ending his engagement to a socialite by turning up drunk at a party and urinating in the fireplace. Some said it was in the grand piano.

In 1867, this loose cannon took over the running of the *New York Herald* from his father. He proved to be a savvy owner. The paper had a huge circulation, gained through his philosophy that the function of a newspaper 'is not to instruct but to startle'. Accordingly, he was the architect of several publicity stunts, such as splashing the front page with an entirely made-up story of wild animals escaping Central Park Zoo. Horrified New Yorkers read of 'a Shocking Sabbath Carnival of Death'.

And alongside his predilection to shock, James Gordon Bennett Jr was also obsessed with owls. He had depictions of them on his cufflinks, in his office, aboard his yacht – and on the front of his newspaper.

When he decided to move the newspaper's headquarters further north in the city, he told the architects he wanted a classic Italian-style building, which is what they delivered – but Bennett wasn't happy with the owl count...

The roof was supposed to be decorated with neo-classical statues of various gods, but, at Bennett's instruction, these were cut out of the architectural renderings and replaced by owls. There ended up being twenty-six owls dotted along the building's roofline alongside a statue of Minerva at the front of the building, above the bell of the clock. Minerva, as the goddess of wisdom, was often symbolised by the image of an owl. When the clock struck, the eyes of the owls either side of Minerva flashed green.



Bennett's obsession reached its apex in 1906 when he asked his architect to design a 200-foot-high sarcophagus in the shape of an owl. He said that, when he died, he wanted to be lowered into the giant mausoleum through the head of the bird. Bennett envisaged tourists entering the massive owl, and then climbing a circular staircase that would pass

by his coffin, suspended in the centre by chains. And at the top, visitors would enjoy some rather magnificent views.

However, the colossal stone owl was never built. If it had been, it would have been higher above sea level than the Statue of Liberty. But if you go to Herald Square in New York, there is a large monument to James Gordon Bennett Jr, erected in 1921. It includes the same sculpture of Minerva that stood at the top of the New York Herald Building. And late at night, if you crane your neck to look above the goddess, near the very top of the monument, there are a pair of Bennett's owls, with their eyes still glowing green.



PART 3: YOU WON'T BELIEVE YOUR EYES

Once you had got over the first shock of seeing something that was half horse, half bird, you started to appreciate the Hippogriffs' gleaming coats, changing smoothly from feather to hair, each of them a different colour: stormy grey, bronze, a pinkish roan, gleaming chestnut and inky black.

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

The Hippogriff is a mythical creature with the front half of an eagle and the hind half of a horse. The first record we have of a Hippogriff being mentioned by name is in the book *Orlando Furioso*. The title in English translates as 'Furious Roland' and it is an epic poem from 1516 by the Italian writer Lodovico Ariosto. In it, the character of Roland meets sorcerers, a gigantic sea monster and even gets a trip to the moon.

Ariosto took inspiration from the Roman author Virgil, who had used the union of a horse with a griffin as a metaphor for ill-fated love in his own writing. A griffin itself is a mythical beast with the body of a lion, and the head and wings of an eagle – essentially something that is completely impossible in the real world. As such, Ariosto uses the knights mounted on Hippogriffs as a symbol of the impossibility of and contradictions between chivalry and

passionate love, and how that love is complicated in the chivalric tradition.

'Hippogriffs!' Hagrid roared happily, waving a hand at them. 'Beau'iful, aren' they?'

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

In one of the drawings in the book, a knight called Ruggiero has tied his Hippogriff mount to a tree, which unbeknown to him is another knight transformed by an evil sorceress. In the meantime, her monstrous minions are approaching in the background. He's got to get away and at the same time he's travelling the countryside trying to rescue his long-lost love.



Harry Potter, at first, simply thinks the Hippogriff is one of the weirdest creatures he has ever seen!

Trotting towards them were a dozen of the most bizarre creatures Harry had ever seen. They had the bodies, hind legs and tails of horses, but the front legs, wings and heads of what seemed to be giant eagles, with cruel, steel-coloured beaks and large, brilliantly orange eyes. The talons on their front legs were half a foot long and deadly-looking.

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

Buckbeak and co. might have been beyond belief for Harry, but they were more than matched by some of the images of larger-than-life creatures that were brought back by some intrepid explorers in history...



If you're even slightly afraid of spiders, meeting an Acromantula, J.K. Rowling's species of giant, talking, human-eating spider, would probably be the most terrifying thing imaginable – just ask Ron Weasley.

And from the middle of the misty domed web, a spider the size of a small elephant emerged, very slowly. There was grey in the black of his body and legs, and each of the eyes on his ugly, pincer head was milky white. He was blind.

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets

Thankfully, real-life spiders don't get as huge as the Acromantula, but spiders known as Avicularia are large enough to feast on birds, as illustrated in Maria Sibylla Merian's *Metamorphosis insectorum Surinamensium*, printed in Amsterdam in 1705. The hand-painted engravings depicted huge spiders eating birds, surrounded by webs and other creepy crawlies, though readers at the time wouldn't believe they were real.

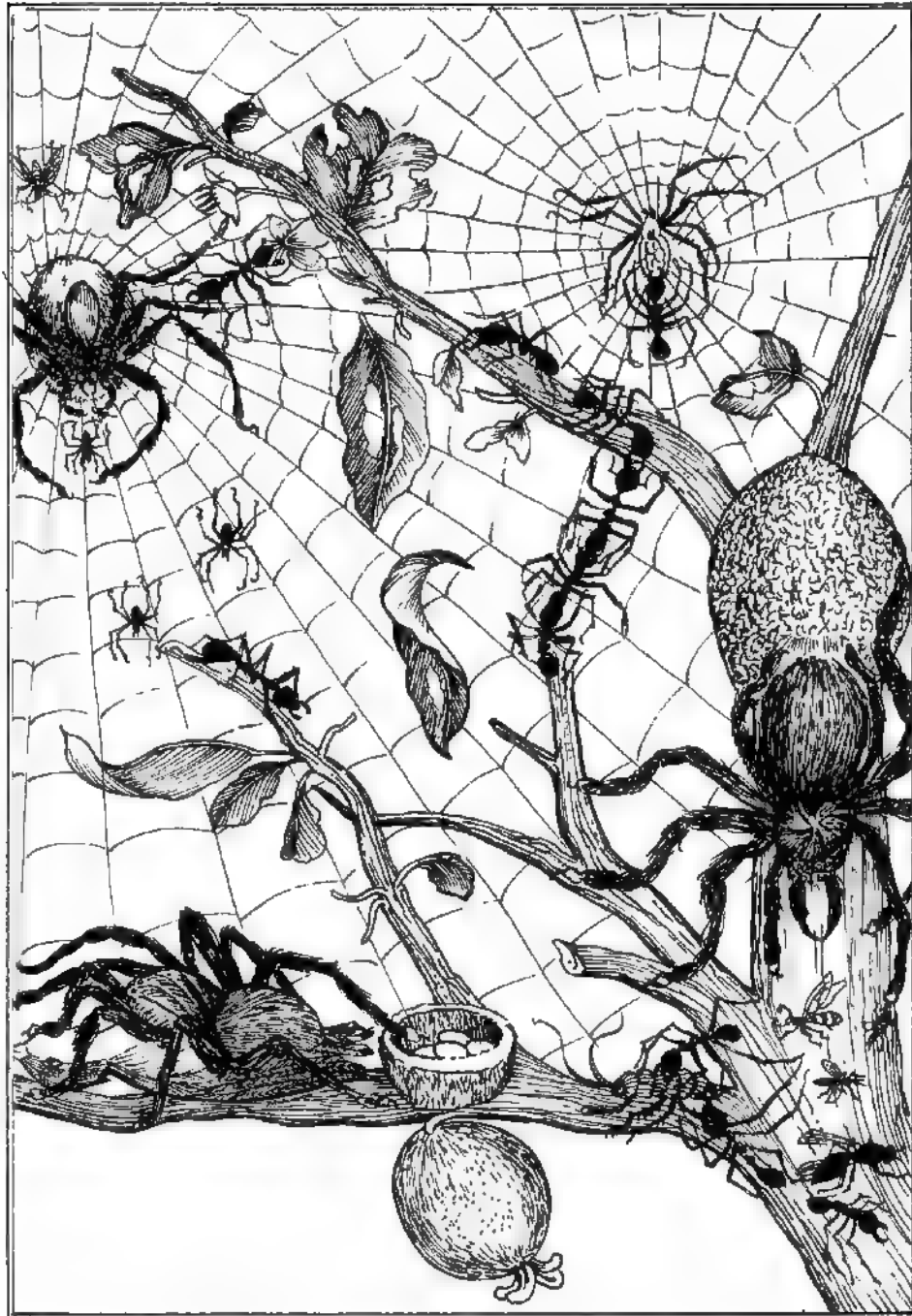
Aragog seemed to be tired of talking. He was backing slowly into his domed web, but his fellow spiders continued to inch slowly towards Harry and Ron.

'We'll just go, then,' Harry called desperately to Aragog, hearing leaves rustling behind him.

'Go?' said Aragog slowly. 'I think not...'

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets

Maria Sibylla Merian was a pioneer. After she divorced her husband, she moved from Frankfurt to Amsterdam. She painted and studied local collections for eight years before the city of Amsterdam awarded her a grant to travel to Surinam to paint its flora and fauna. This was an almost unheard-of achievement at the time, since women weren't even allowed to go to university, and such grants were usually awarded to men.



Merian set off from Amsterdam to Surinam in 1699 and the expedition was probably the first scientific expedition led by a woman to observe natural phenomena in their native environment. Travelling to South America in the 1690s was extremely dangerous and required sailing across the Atlantic. Anyone attempting it had to risk serious

diseases with no cure, and then there was the prospect of venturing into the jungle with just your paints. Surinam was a sugar colony at the time and the only people living there were men making money out of sugar and the people they had enslaved to help them do it.

Maria Merian's pioneering approach to research was matched by her attitude to book production. She returned from Surinam with a sketchbook full of images of insects, many of them new to Western science, which she sold as a commercial enterprise. It was successful, though the bird-eating spiders were deemed beyond belief and a largely male audience thought Merian a fantasist. It wasn't until 1863 (150 years later) that it was agreed she was completely right. Like a lot of women who broke through barriers in history, particularly in science and business, Merian had to withstand persistent doubt and cynicism from the patriarchal society in which she lived.



PART 4: CREATURES OF THE DEEP

For thousands of years people have gazed into the oceans. Every now and then, something unusual emerges from the briny depths, and with them surface the stories: legends, fairy tales and sailors' yarns of half-human creatures with the tail of a fish. Some of these stories are of love and loss, some of death and drowning. If you want to spend some time with the world's most mysterious and captivating marine life, go and swim with mermaids.

In an early draft of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, Harry and Ron are introduced to mermaids much sooner than the Triwizard Tournament in *Goblet of Fire*. After they have commandeered the enchanted Ford Anglia, rather than smash into the Whomping Willow, they crash into the Hogwarts lake and encounter the mermaids that live there. The merpeople save the boys by flipping over the car and bringing it to the safety of the bank. But these mermaids aren't the enchanting beauties of popular folklore. One is described as follows: 'A cloud of blackest hair, thick and tangled like seaweed, floated all around her. Her lower body was a great scaly fishtail the colour of gun-metal; ropes of shells and pebbles hung about her neck; her skin was a pale, silvery grey and her eyes, flashing in the headlights, looked dark and threatening.'

An editorial note on the manuscript wonders whether the merpeople scene actually works, since they are not encountered again in the second book. There's a suggestion that the car could develop boosters and suddenly shoot out of the water, but ultimately J.K. Rowling decided to replace

the scene entirely with the car crashing into the Whomping Willow.



... would they pull him back down to the depths when the time was up? Did they perhaps eat humans? Harry's legs were seizing up with the effort to keep swimming; his shoulders were aching horribly with the effort of dragging Ron and the girl...

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

Tales of sirens luring sailors to their deaths have been around for thousands of years, and feature in stories as far back as Homer's *Odyssey*. Sirens are sinister creatures and can be thought of as close cousins of the merpeople of the Harry Potter stories.

The oldest recorded merpeople were known as sirens (Greece) and it is in warmer waters that we find the beautiful mermaids so frequently depicted in Muggle literature and painting. The selkies of Scotland and the merrows of Ireland are less beautiful, but they share that love of music which is common to all merpeople.

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them

One illustration from a 13th-century French bestiary shows three men in a rowing boat as a siren drags one of them into the water by his hair. The other two men aren't watching this; they are distracted by a centaur, or an onocentaur (as it's referred to in the bestiary), that has appeared on the shore of the lake.

This siren has a fish's tail, which is a change from how sirens were thought of before – as a woman's head with a bird's body – though the text indicates that she still lured the sailors with her birdsong. After that, it gets worse, because after dragging her victims into the water she promptly eats them.

A slightly later version of the mermaid-siren hybrid has been found in a 'game book' from 17th-century England. A game book was a sheet of vellum, or paper made from animal skin, folded to create a concertinaed game. Made as a bit of fun and to entertain, it was possibly given as a love token between a couple, or as a gift to a child. It could be pocketed quite easily and was taken around to entertain people.

The game included mythical beasts such as dragons, manticores and griffins. On each part of the main sections there was a different type of animal and creature, and by folding the flaps over the top of the mermaid, for example, you would transform your creature into a being with different body parts. You could leave the top half of the mermaid and fold over her scaly tail and give her some legs to fully become a woman. Or you could fold over the top of the lady's body and give her a man's torso so that you got a man-maid.

One creature in the game book was very like what we've come to think of as a traditional depiction of a mermaid, with her long blonde hair and bright red lips, carrying a mirror and comb and her tail finished with pink scales, ending in a bright blue fin. Although different from the merpeople you might find at Hogwarts, she wasn't to be

trusted and was surrounded with various verses describing the creature: 'Mermaids lure sailors, who leaving off their ship were found, / On shore, by my enchantments drown'd.'



At the beginning of the 18th century, a man called Samuel Fallours, an English-born ex-soldier, ended up on the Indonesian island of Ambon while working for the Dutch East India Company. He spent a long time on the beach, along with other artists. He painted the fish he saw in the hauls of the local fishermen, then sold his artwork to the rich. He found that the more brightly coloured the fish, the better the price.

So as time went by, the paintings became more elaborate: a plain, drab false-stone fish was made resplendent in vivid reds, yellows and blues; the shell of a crab was decorated with the moon; fish skins had brightly coloured stars, and some had human faces. There were seahorses replete with itty-bitty saddles for riding. And he included some equally fanciful descriptions, such as one of the four-legged anglerfish, which followed him around like a dog, and of the lobster that lived in the trees.

Then, in 1719, Louis Renard, a book-dealer, apothecary and spy based in Amsterdam (who sounds like he could very well have kept a shop in Diagon Alley), published the world's first book on fishes from the waters of the East Indies. It was called *Fishes, Crayfishes and Crabs, of Diverse Colours and Extraordinary Form, That Are Found Around the Islands of the Moluccas and on the Coasts of the Southern Lands* and was illustrated in full colour with Fallours' artwork.

In the end, the book contained pictures of over 415 fish, 41 crustaceans, two stick insects... and one mermaid. Supposedly caught off the coast of the Indonesian island of Borné, and measuring 59 inches in length, she reputedly lived in a tank of water for four days and seven hours and occasionally cried like a mouse. According to Renard, she refused to eat, despite being offered small fish.

When the book was published, the public questioned the accuracy of the eccentrically portrayed sea life, even with the affidavits attesting to the reality of the specimens Renard had included. And while people were rightly dubious, some scientists are now re-evaluating the scientific worth of the book. Minus the wild colouring, over 90 per cent of the fish can still be identified and, since Ambon's harbour has become heavily polluted, the type of fish in the area may have changed, in which case this whimsical book will have become a valuable record. It might just be that the mermaids have simply moved on to cleaner waters!



In 1942, Princess Alexandra, second Duchess of Fife and granddaughter of King Edward VII, presented a 'mermaid' to the British Museum that had been 'caught' around Japan some 200 years earlier. It was quite an alarming-looking creature, with its sharp-toothed silent scream, but was actually the torso of a monkey grafted onto the tail of a fish.

Statues of mermaids were surprisingly common and part of a growing trend in Europe in the 18th century, mostly hailing from Japan where there was a vogue for them. These types of mermaid became world-famous and some say they

were central to the fame of 'the Greatest Showman on Earth', P.T. Barnum.

Barnum displayed the 'Fiji Mermaid' around the United States in the 19th century – though it supposedly got burnt to ashes by a fire in the 1880s. Barnum's mermaid came on show around the time the duck-billed platypus was first revealed to the American public. The egg-laying mammal – with a beak like a duck and poisonous spurs on its legs – was so weird that people thought it must have been stitched together, but, since it was proved real, it seemed plausible that the mermaid might have been another newly discovered species too.

Another example of a mermaid, kept at the Horniman Museum in South London, has even been given the scientific classification of *Pseudosiren paradoxoides* – 'absurd pretend merman'. The Horniman took DNA samples, X-rays and even a CT scan. It actually has a real fish tail, but the head was built up by winding bundles of fibre around a stick of wood, which was then coated with clay, and had fish jaws embedded in it with an outer skin of pigmented papier mâché layered on top. Its arms are wire and papier mâché too and were tipped with bird claws to create the idea of fingers.



There's an interesting disconnect between these rather horrifying specimens (which owe much to the tradition of *ningyo* – Japanese supernatural creatures displayed in Shinto shrines) and the origins of the mermaid myth, coming from sailors who had seen exotic sea creatures like manatees and porpoises, which were transfigured in their minds into female mermaids.



PART 5: GHOSTS, TROLLS, GIANTS AND DRAGONS

Not until 1811 were definitions found that most of the magical community found acceptable. Grogan Stump, the newly appointed Minister for Magic, decreed that a 'being' was 'any creature that has sufficient intelligence to understand the laws of the magical community and to bear part of the responsibility in shaping those laws'.

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them

As well as having magical creatures and fantastic beasts in the wizarding world, there are also entities that are harder to define. Ghosts are part of the 'Spirit Division' and can, of course, be found all over Hogwarts.

An exception was made for the ghosts, who asserted that it was insensitive to class them as 'beings' when they were so clearly 'has-beens'. Stump therefore created the three divisions of the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures that exist today: the Beast Division, the Being Division and the Spirit Division.

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them

As part of her research for the books, J.K. Rowling drew a sketch of Hogwarts ghost Nearly Headless Nick and showed how being 'nearly headless' works, depicting him with his head on normally and then demonstrating what it looks like with his head – nearly – off.

'Nearly Headless? How can you be nearly headless?'

Sir Nicholas looked extremely miffed, as if their little chat wasn't going at all the way he wanted.

'Like this,' he said irritably. He seized his left ear and pulled. His whole head swung off his neck and fell on to his shoulder as if it was on a hinge. Someone had obviously tried to behead him, but not done it properly.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

The early version of the character has a collar rather than a ruff, and he's dressed in different historical attire.

'That does look good,' said the ghost in the ruff sadly, watching Harry cut up his steak.

'Can't you –?'

'I haven't eaten for nearly five hundred years,' said the ghost. 'I don't need to, of course, but one does miss it. I don't think I've introduced myself? Sir Nicholas de Mimsy-Porpington at your service. Resident ghost of Gryffindor Tower.'

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

The second most notable ghost at Hogwarts is, of course, Peeves the Poltergeist, who J.K. Rowling credits as the most notorious and troublesome poltergeist in British history. He has menaced the corridors of Hogwarts for over a thousand years. J.K. Rowling's 1991 illustration of Peeves resembles a malevolent court jester with his hat and bell, and his shoes with their curled toes. US audiobook narrator Jim Dale would later base his interpretation of Peeves on the British comedian Terry Scott, who was famous for pretending to be a little boy on the radio, even dressing in a school hat in front of the microphone.



NEARLY HEADLESS
NICK

Drawing of Nearly Headless Nick by J.K. Rowling (1991)



PEEVES THE
POLTERGEIST

Drawing of Peeves by J.K. Rowling (1991)

There was a pop and a little man with wicked dark eyes and a wide mouth appeared, floating cross-legged in the air, clutching the walking sticks.

'Oooooooh!' he said, with an evil cackle. 'Ickle firsties! What fun!'

He swooped suddenly at them. They all ducked.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone



Trolls bear a humanoid appearance, walk upright, may be taught a few simple words and yet are less intelligent than the dumbest unicorn and possess no magical powers in their own right except for their prodigious and unnatural strength.

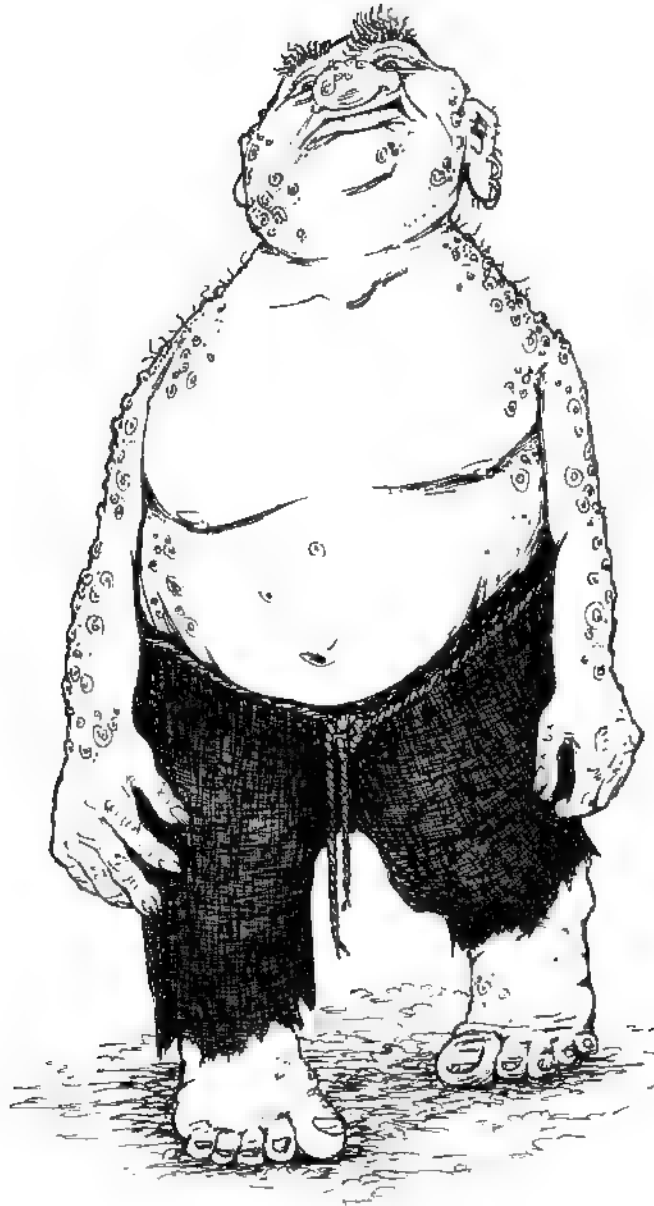
Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them

Aside from bringing the precious narwhal horn from northern Europe, the Vikings also brought with them their own stories and legends. One of the most enduring creatures from those tales was the troll – hot-tempered and a bit dim.

It was a horrible sight. Twelve feet tall, its skin was a dull, granite grey, its great lumpy body like a boulder with its small bald head perched on top like a coconut. It had short legs thick as tree trunks with flat, horny feet.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

Trolls have long played an important part in folklore and fairy-tale traditions, so when we encounter one in Harry Potter, it might feel quite familiar. Trolls are lodged in our cultural subconscious and reside there just as they live under bridges in stories. They can be outwitted, but they are threatening and dangerous at the same time, often *because* of their lack of intelligence.



Howling with pain, the troll twisted and flailed its club, with Harry clinging on for dear life; any second, the troll was going to rip him off or catch him a terrible blow with the club.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

The original scene in which Harry and Ron confront the terrifying troll in the girls' bathroom was significantly changed in the drafting, which was generally shortened to help it move at a faster pace. One thing J.K. Rowling simplified was the means by which the troll was trapped in the bathroom: by simply turning a key, rather than the elaborate method of using a chain to secure a bolt in the wall. The early draft also contains a deleted scene in which Harry, Ron and Hermione are being taught about trolls. The scene got cut, but the information about there being different varieties of trolls that live in different environments then got reused in the Hogwarts library book *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*.

There are three types of troll: mountain, forest and river. The mountain troll is the largest and most vicious. It is bald, with a pale-grey skin. The forest troll has a pale-green skin and some specimens have hair, which is green or brown, thin and straggly. The river troll has short horns and may be hairy. It has a purplish skin and is often found lurking beneath bridges. Trolls eat raw flesh and are not fussy in their prey, which ranges from wild animals to humans.

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them

Trolls have been represented through the years sometimes as vicious man-eating creatures, and at other times as more amiable, though deeply stupid, lumps of meat. How they were portrayed depended on the different prejudices and fears invested in them as fictional beings.

Harry then did something that was both very brave and very stupid: he took a great running jump and managed to fasten his arms around the troll's neck from behind. The troll couldn't feel Harry hanging there, but even a troll will notice if you stick a long bit of wood up its nose, and Harry's wand had still been in his hand when he'd jumped – it had gone straight up one of the troll's nostrils.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone



'So you have been to look for giants?' said Harry, grinning as he sat down at the table.

Hagrid set tea in front of each of them, sat down, picked up his steak again and slapped it back over his face.

'Yeah, all righ', he grunted, 'I have.'

'And you found them?' said Hermione in a hushed voice.

'Well, they're not that difficult ter find, ter be honest,' said Hagrid. 'Pretty big, see.'

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix

There are giants and then there are *giants*. In 1638, Jesuit monk Athanasius Kircher was on a trip to Italy to study volcanoes and caves when he found himself in the middle of one of the region's biggest earthquakes. He became obsessed about what might have caused the earthquake

under the ground and subsequently wrote a book called *Mundus subterraneus* ('The Underground World') about the whole subject. It covered a massive range of subjects when it was eventually published in 1665: geography, geology, archaeology, palaeontology, ocean currents and farming.

Many of Kircher's ideas seem fantastical to us now, but he was one of the great minds of his age – some compare his breadth of knowledge and interests to Leonardo da Vinci. His theory in *Mundus subterraneus* was that 'the whole earth is not solid but everywhere gaping and hollowed with empty rooms and spaces and hidden burrows'. He got a little fantastical after that – his caverns contained wonders, including dragons, and he told a story about a vast human skeleton found sitting in a cave on Mount Erice in Sicily.

'You went poking around dark caves looking for giants?'
said Ron, with awed respect in his voice.

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix

One illustration in his book supposedly reconstructed this '*Gygantis skeleton*'. The huge giant he pictures holds a massive tree trunk as if it's merely a stick, as he towers over other famous giants, including one purportedly from Switzerland, all of which Kircher says have been found. On Kircher's scale, it has humans at a third of the height of the biblical giant Goliath.

His depiction of the Swiss giant swamps Goliath, who, in turn, is tiny compared to the giant from the North-West African country of Mauritania. But they all pale in comparison to the Sicilian giant, who at 300 feet is as tall as Big Ben or the Statue of Liberty. The discovery in Mount Erice was purported to have taken place in the 14th

century; somehow the seated skeleton had retained the integrity to stay together in that position.

Although Kircher's book included magical elements like giants, dragons and a map with the location of the submerged island of Atlantis, it was a serious attempt by a brilliant mind to understand the world. Kircher wanted to see whether volcanoes were linked together under the earth – he even climbed into Mount Vesuvius, which had erupted seven years earlier. He was nothing if not intrepid!



If the motorbike was huge, it was nothing to the man sitting astride it. He was almost twice as tall as a normal man and at least five times as wide. He looked simply too big to be allowed, and so wild – long tangles of bushy black hair and beard hid most of his face, he had hands the size of dustbin lids and his feet in their leather boots were like baby dolphins.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

Everyone's favourite giant, or rather half-giant, is Hagrid: loyal friend, mother to Norbert the dragon, owner of a magical pink flowery umbrella and one of Harry's father figures. He's an elemental character, living in the margins, on the edge of the Forbidden Forest. And, beyond that, he's also very hairy.

'If he wants ter go, a great Muggle like you won't stop him,' growled Hagrid. 'Stop Lily an' James Potter's son goin' ter Hogwarts! Yer mad. His name's been down ever since he was born. He's off ter the finest school of witchcraft and wizardry in the world. Seven years there and he won't know himself. He'll be with youngsters of his own sort, fer a change, an' he'll be under the greatest Headmaster Hogwarts ever had, Albus Dumbled-'

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

Everyone has their own idea of who Hagrid is, what he looks like and how he talks.

When Jim Dale recorded Hagrid for the US versions of the Harry Potter audiobooks, he pitched his voice low and rough, like a cross between Long John Silver and a big old uncle he had. The result was that he immediately lost his voice when he performed it in the studio. A long six-page anecdote Hagrid tells after being asked whether he's had a nice holiday took Dale days to record.

'Oh, well - I was at Hogwarts meself but I - er - got expelled, ter tell yeh the truth. In me third year. They snapped me wand in half an' everything. But Dumbledore let me stay on as gamekeeper. Great man, Dumbledore.'

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

J.K. Rowling was late to the first day recording the UK audiobook of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, but

when she arrived she was especially keen that the narrator, Stephen Fry, got the voice of Hagrid right. Luckily they both heard the same voice in their heads. Fry honed in on the tender and gentle way that Hagrid spoke to Harry, especially the way he used Harry's name so much when he addressed him. It was this tenderness from a character of such huge size and clumsiness that shaped Hagrid's voice.

J.K. Rowling has also illustrated Hagrid herself – Hagrid with Harry at Gringotts bank – in a scene from *Philosopher's Stone*, travelling in one of the goblin's carts down into the vaults. As they hurtle at speed in the cart driven by the goblin Griphook, the oversized Hagrid is squeezed into the cart and covering his eyes with one of his giant hands. By contrast, Harry's eyes are wide open, glimpsing fire and wondering at its source.



Drawing of Harry and Hagrid at Gringotts by J.K. Rowling

Harry's eyes stung as the cold air rushed past them, but he kept them wide open. Once, he thought he saw a burst of fire at the end of a passage and twisted around to see if it was a dragon, but too late – they plunged even deeper, passing an underground lake where huge stalactites and stalagmites grew from the ceiling and floor.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone



Probably the most famous of all magical beasts, dragons are among the most difficult to hide. The female is generally larger and more aggressive than the male, though neither should be approached by any but highly skilled and trained wizards.

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them

The fire-breathing dragon of Gringotts, hinted at in that scene from *Philosopher's Stone*, is met properly in the final book when Harry, Hermione and Ron escape from Gringotts in *Deathly Hallows*. An early draft manuscript of the scene was full of arrows, crossings-out and sentences scrawled in the margins – it was a breathless piece and instead of writing dialogue at this stage, J.K. Rowling indicated where it should be added later by putting an 'x' there instead. It's an example of her wanting to put the essence of the scene

down on the page as quickly as possible in order to capture it, knowing that she would rework it later on.

Another section of the handwritten draft has Harry destroying the Hufflepuff Horcrux while the others are in the Lestrage vault. In the final version of the book, this is performed by Hermione – a change that makes sense and adds a certain symmetry, allowing Harry, Ron and Hermione to destroy a Horcrux each.

He stretched out an arm; Hermione hoisted herself up; Ron climbed on behind them, and a second later the dragon became aware that it was untethered.

With a roar it reared: Harry dug in his knees, clutching as tightly as he could to the jagged scales as the wings opened, knocking the shrieking goblins aside like skittles, and it soared into the air.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows



‘Well, I’ve bin doin’ some readin’,’ said Hagrid, pulling a large book from under his pillow. ‘Got this outta the library – Dragon-Breeding for Pleasure and Profit – it’s a bit outta date, o’ course, but it’s all in here.’

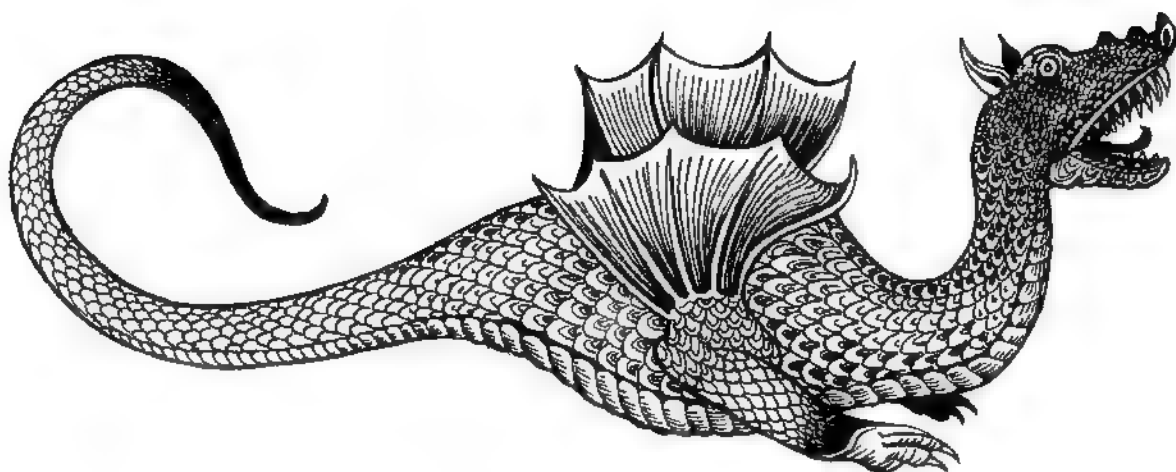
Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone

Gringotts wasn't the only place in the series to contain dragons. As you might remember, before the Triwizard Tournament Harry was desperately pulling down 'every book he could find on dragons' before he was due to meet one face to face in the first task. He could have probably done with Ulisse Aldrovandi's *Serpentum et draconum historiae* ('A History of Snakes and Dragons'), published in 1640, nearly sixty years after Aldrovandi's death.

Ulisse Aldrovandi decided not to become a doctor so he could study his passion – what we'd call 'natural history' today. He was known as the Bolognese Aristotle and amassed an outstanding 'cabinet of curiosities', a collection of extraordinary specimens, oddities and natural wonders. It had thousands of items and was described in its time as 'the eighth Wonder of the World', and one of his most amazing exhibits was said to be a dragon. The book he wrote to catalogue his collection is a veritable array of dragons, snakes and beasts.

Four fully grown, enormous, vicious-looking dragons were rearing on their hind legs inside an enclosure fenced with thick planks of wood, roaring and snorting – torrents of fire were shooting into the dark sky from their open, fanged mouths, fifty feet above the ground on their outstretched necks.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire



One of the varieties of dragon Aldrovandi illustrated was the Ethiopian dragon, and he even distinguished between them by the types of ridges they had on their backs. In *Goblet of Fire* Harry is confronted with an array of dragons whose different characteristics and features are consistent with those 'captured' by self-professed natural historians like Aldrovandi.

There was a silvery blue one with long, pointed horns, snapping and snarling at the wizards on the ground; a smooth-scaled green one, which was writhing and stamping with all its might; a red one with an odd fringe of fine gold spikes around its face, which was shooting mushroom-shaped fire clouds into the air, and a gigantic black one, more lizard-like than the others, which was nearest to them.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

In 1572, none other than Pope Gregory XIII had a dragon problem and, as the world's foremost expert, Aldrovandi was the man he called in. Aldrovandi also happened to be

the pope's cousin. A fearsome dragon was found in the fields of Bologna and was seen as a bad omen. Once the creature had been captured and its body given to Aldrovandi to do research on, and to deduce what it might foretell for the future of the papacy, Aldrovandi wrote up a report on dragons for the pope. He concluded that the Bologna dragon was a good omen.

At this time, Europe was a very religious society expanding into new territories, and to its inhabitants, it wasn't beyond the realms of possibility that a dragon might exist, particularly in India or Ethiopia. To superstitious Europeans, who were seeing all sorts of weird and wonderful specimens being brought back from overseas, a dragon could have been just one more new curiosity.

After his death, Aldrovandi's vast collection was donated to Bologna University. Over the centuries, the collection has been split, pillaged or lost. Out of the thousands of pieces, only a fraction remains. But if you visit Bologna you can book a tour of the University Library and still see a small part of the eighth Wonder of the World.



PART 6: FANTASTIC BEASTS – REAL AND IMAGINED

Bestiaries and descriptions of strange and wonderful creatures go back hundreds of years. But just as these beasts could be derived from reality and then take off in an extraordinary direction, so it is true that some animals are purely fiction and have to be conjured in an artist's head. *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, as illustrated by artist and 'accidental illustrator' Olivia Lomenech Gill, is a modern version of one. She is an expert printer and a third of the artwork for the book consisted of copperplate etchings printed on her own three-ton press. It's the same printing technique that was used to create Audubon's snowy owls.

Olivia was already fascinated by antiquarian books and old natural history illustrations, and she went straight to the early natural history encyclopaedia *Historia animalium* by Conrad Gessner for inspiration. Rather than lean on digital techniques and modern technology, Olivia wanted to reach back – to re-embrace the simplicity and tactile processes that have been the hallmarks of making art since images were painted onto the walls of the Lascaux caves in France nearly twenty thousand years ago.



The phoenix is a magnificent, swan-sized, scarlet bird with a long golden tail, beak and talons. It nests on mountain peaks and is found in Egypt, India and China. The phoenix lives to an immense age as it can regenerate, bursting into flames when its body begins to fail and rising again from the ashes as a chick.

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them

The phoenix has long been imagined as a beautiful, magical bird that consumes itself in fire but rises again from the ashes, symbolising rebirth and hope. Images depicting this mythical process can be found in texts dating as far back as the 13th century, when a medieval bestiary illustrated a phoenix green in hue and burning in bright red flames.

It was said that the phoenix could be found in Arabia and that it lived for 500 years before it made its own funeral pyre from leaves and branches, sat within it, fanned the flames with its own wings and caught alight. After the ninth day, the legend had it rising from the ashes reborn, with clear symbolism derived from the story of the resurrection of Christ.

Another book published in Paris in 1550 is entirely dedicated to the phoenix: *L'Histoire et description du phoenix* ('The History and Description of the Phoenix') by Guy de la Garde. The meticulous image of a red-bodied phoenix, with flames seemingly bursting out from the top of a tree trunk, is captioned: 'A description of the phoenix and its fortunate place of residence, of its long life, pure conversation, excellent beauty, diverse colours, and of its end and remarkable resurrection.'

colledis aromatu uirgul
as. rogam sibi instruo.
& conuersa ad radium so
lis alarum plausu uolu
tarium sibi incendium
mittit seq; urit. p̄stea
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ram gerit dñs nr ihc xpc
qui dicit potestate habeo
ponendi animam meā



& iterū sumendi eam. Si ergo feryr mortificandi atq;
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bo dei qui uerus dei filius est q̄ dicit potestate habeo. 7. c. De
cendit nāq; saluator nr de celo alas suas suauitatis odorib;
nom & uetis testam̄ta repleuit. & in ara crucis seipm deo
p̄ri p̄ nobis optulit. & tertia die resurrexit.



De la Garde dedicated the book to Princess Marguerite, a patron of the arts and sister of King Henri II of France, probably in an attempt to gain favour by associating her with such a beautiful and miraculous creature as a phoenix. In mythology phoenixes were also associated with the sun god, Helios, and depicted with seven rays of light coming out of their heads, much in the manner of a crown.

'First of all, Harry, I want to thank you,' said Dumbledore, eyes twinkling again. 'You must have shown me real loyalty down in the Chamber. Nothing but that could have called Fawkes to you.'

He stroked the phoenix, which had fluttered down onto his knee. Harry grinned awkwardly as Dumbledore watched him.

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets

Jim Kay's beautiful illustration of Fawkes the phoenix, which can be found in his illustrated edition of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, was inspired by the hoatzin, which looks like it might have been a prehistoric bird, and uses the tiny claws on its wings to clamber about. Kay was also inspired by Audubon for the study, which bursts with colour and life.

The bird, meanwhile, had become a fireball; it gave one loud shriek and next second there was nothing but a smouldering pile of ash on the floor.

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets



While the phoenix is a magical bird with Christian associations, the simurgh is an Iranian thunderbird found in a 1698 book from India called *Collection of Rarities* by Sultan Muhammed Balkhi. With an orange head and wings of four striped colours (yellow, light and dark blue and a purple-tinged red), as well as long tail feathers of gold, green, red and blue, it is a very striking bird.

The simurgh was traditionally portrayed in pre-Islamic Iran as a composite creature with snarling canine head, forward-pointing ears, wings and a peacock-like tail. In Persian literature, the simurgh was usually depicted in flight with swirling tail feathers. It's best known for its part in the epic Persian story *Book of Kings*.

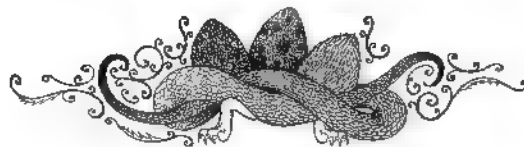
In the story, the hero, Zal, is abandoned as a baby on a high mountain by his father, the king, because he was born with white hair. But the wise simurgh rescues him and raises him in her nest. Time passes and Zal grows into a noble young man. The king realises the foolishness of his decision and prays to God for forgiveness, and the simurgh returns his son. Saddened, she gives Zal three feathers, telling him that if he ever finds himself in trouble he must burn them, and she will appear. Zal then summons the simurgh when his wife Rudabah is near death during a difficult labour. The simurgh appears and instructs Zal on how to perform a caesarean section, saving his wife and child in the process. Subsequently, as king of the birds, the simurgh became a metaphor for God in Sufi mysticism and – since no one has

ever seen one – the subject of all kinds of imaginative creations.



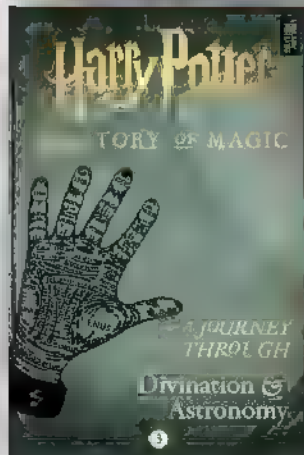
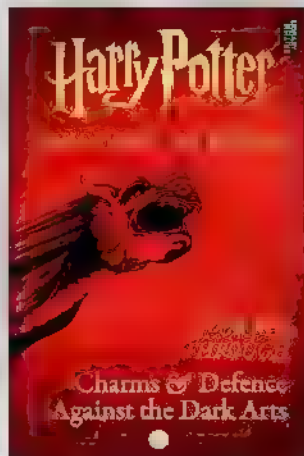
Magical creatures are as central to the Harry Potter stories as Harry, Hermione and Ron. A trusty cat, toad or owl might accompany pupils to Hogwarts, and they would almost certainly encounter a troll and an array of ghosts while they were there. From well-known folkloric creatures such as giants, dragons and merpeople to lesser-known beings such as the Acromantula and Hippogriffs, they all play a key role in Harry fulfilling his destiny as the Boy Who Lived. And, as the early drafts by J.K. Rowling show, these were some of the most exciting and dynamic scenes to write.

Naturalists and explorers over the centuries have been just as thrilled by the possibility of such animals existing in our world, travelling the globe to encounter weird and wonderful creatures and attempting to push the development of science in the process. But magic has always crept in, because fundamentally humans want to believe in the unbelievable – that a narwhal tusk is actually a unicorn horn – and so the bestiaries and cabinets of curiosity from the medieval period onwards have found a thrilling new life in the Harry Potter stories and *Fantastic Beasts* film series. If you care enough for magical creatures in your imagination, they will enhance your life in return!



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Inspired by the *Harry Potter:*
A History of Magic exhibition

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This digital edition published by Pottermore Publishing in 2019

This book is inspired by the British Library exhibition
Harry Potter: A History of Magic.

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ISBN 978-1-78110-616-7